

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 00152 290635Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /082 W
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R 250926Z JAN 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5556
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0152

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IZ, SY
SUBJ: EFFORTS TO UNIFY BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND

1. LOCAL SOURCES INDICATE THAT SECRET IRAQI-SYRIAN TALKS
ARE CONTINUING. LATEST RUMORS PLACE UNIFICATION OF BAATH PARTY
NATIONAL COMMAND ON TOP OF AGENDA WITH FOLLOWING LINEUP ONE
POSSIBILITY: SECRETARY GENERAL AFLAQ, DEPUTY SYG BITAR,
FOUR SEATS FROM BAGHDAD BRANCH AND FOUR FROM DAMASCUS.
LIKELY BAGHDAD NOMINEES ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE ARE
BAKR, SADDAM HUSSEIN, MUNIF AL-RAZZAZ, AND TARIQ AZIZ.
AFLAQ WOULD BE ONLY SYRIAN EMIGRE ON COMMAND. IF HE
WANTS THE JOB IRAQIS WOULD ARGUE HE MERITS BEING SYG
BY BIRTUE OF HIS HISTORIC ROLE IN BAATH PARTY BUT THAT
HIS AGE AND ILL HEALTH WILL ENSURE HIS LEADERSHIP IN
NOMINAL. BAGHDAD REGIME WOULD NOT PRESS CASE FOR
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PAGE 02 BAGHDA 00152 290635Z

MORE ACTIVE SYRIAN EMIGRES, LIKE SHIBLI AYSAMI, WHO
ARE ANATHEMA TO DAMASCUS LEADERSHIP.

2. IRAQ WOULD PROBABLY RESIST SYRIAN DESIRE THAT ANY
IRAQI FORCES IN SYRIA BE UNDER SYRIAN COMMAND, BUT MIGHT ACCEPT
A UNIFIED COMMAND ON SYRIAN TERRITORY WHICH WAS MORE
NOMINAL THAN REAL. IRAQIS, OF COURSE, HAVE FINANCIAL

WHEREWITHAL TO SWEETEN ANY DEAL INVOLVING MILITARY COOPERATION. REOPENING OF PIPELINE ALSO FIGURES AS ATTRACTIVE ELEMENT IN SPECULATION ABOUT SYRIAN-IRAQI RECONCILIATION, BUT THAT STEOP INVOLVES ECONOMIC FACTORS AND POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS WITH TURKEY.

3. MEDIA BLACKOUT ON CRITICISM OF SYRIA CONTINUES NEARLY TOTAL. NOTABLE EXCEPTION WAS OBLIQUE REFERENCE BY BAATH NATIONAL COMMAND MEMBER NAIM HADDAD TO SYRIAN POSITION AT TIME OF TRIPOLI CONFERENCE. REFERENCE WAS IN CONTEXT OF IRAQI CONDEMNATION OF SADATIST POLICIES, A THEME WHICH HAS DOMINATED IRAQI NEWS COVERAGE NEARLY TWO MONTHS.

4. SYRIAN EMBASSY COUNSELOR TELLS US THAT SYRIA UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT IRAQI INVITATION TO HIGH LEVEL BAGHDAD CONFERENCE OF STEADFASTNESS FRONT. HE SUGGESTED ALGIERS AS MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE GROUND. OTHER SOURCES DOUBT IRAQIS WISH TO ATTEND HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE IN ALGIERS. IF CURRENT SECRET TALKS ARE SUCCESSFUL, NON-BAATHI CAPITAL AS SITE FOR RECONCILIATION WOULD UNDERCUT ANY CLAIMS TO REAL PARTY UNTIY.

5. COMMENT: WE CONTINUE TO ASSESS PROSPECTS FOR GENUINE IRAQI-SYRIAN RECONCILIATION WITH GREAT SKEPTICISM. TACTICAL EMBRACE IN ANTI-SADAT STEADFASTNESS FRONT IS POSSIBILITY, BUT SPECULATION OF MAKEUP OF JOINT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BAGHDA 00152 290635Z

NATIONAL COMMAND (PARA 1) IS PROBABLY PREMATURE.
PECK

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